MONUMENT TO "THE WAMPUM," OR CHIEF MEXICO, AND ITS DEDICATION,
MANITOWOC RAPIDS, WIS.

RENKE.

CHIEF WA-ME-GE-SAKO

MARCH 12, 1999

CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION
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HERALD TIMES REPORTER

Chief Wa-me-ge-sako (pronounced wah-mix-I-co), also known as the Wampum or Mexico, was the recognized chief of the combined band of Chippewa, Ottawa and Menominee Indians of Manitowoc County when the first wave of settlers, mostly from New England states, came in 1835 and 1836 to work in the white pine forests which grew along the Manitowoc River.

Wa-me-ge-sako was born in 1789 at Manitowoc Rapids. His father, Chaiconda, also was born and died at the Rapids. His grandfather, Etoigeshak, had migrated with his band to Wisconsin from Canada many years before. Wampum and his Menominee wife had 11 children.

Chief Wa-me-ge-sako, like most Wisconsin Indians, was friendly to the early settlers. Dr. Louis Falge, author of a two-volume history of the county published in 1911, reports, "he was a man of fine physique, erect, over six feet in height, very dignified and courteous in demeanor, possessing considerable strength of his character, and more than ordinary intelligence ... He was upright in all his dealings with his neighbors as well as with his own people, highly respected and trusted by both ... "

During the first genuine Indian scare in 1842 when vague rumors of an impending massacre filled the air and active preparations for defense were made throughout the county, it was Wampum who fully reassured the settlers that their fears where wholly groundless.

Chief Wa-me-ge-sako was a signer of Indian land cession treaties at Buttes des Morts in 1827, Green Bay in 1828, Prairie du Chien in 1829 and Chicago in 1833.

By a treaty, made in Washington, with the Menominee in 1831, all the land (including Manitowoc County) to the east of Green Bay, the Fox River and Lake Winnebago, and from Death's Door to Milwaukee was sold to the United State government.

Chief Wa-me-ge-sako died at the Rapids, site of his band's village, in December 1844 at the presumed age of 55. His final resting place is unknown.

On August 8, 1909, the Manitowoc County Historical Society dedicated a large sandstone monument in his honor at Manitowoc Rapids. Judge Emil Baensch presided. Thousands of people witnessed the unveiling of the monument by Blanch Braunel.

Chief Mexico's monument remains today on a high bluff at N. 44th and Broadway streets in the city of Manitowoc as a testimony of his integrity and friendliness.

— BOB FAY

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